

REMARKS

By this Amendment, the specification is amended at page 8, line 17, new claims 35-39 are presented for examination, and a Replacement Sheet 1/2 is submitted to amend FIG. 1 and FIG. 2 of the drawings. Claims 7-16 were previously canceled. Claims 1, 5, 6 and 17-34 were previously amended or presented for examination. Claims 2-4 remain as originally filed. As a result, claims 1-6 and 17-39 are pending in the application.

Specification

Pursuant to paragraph 1 of the above-reference Office Action, the disclosure stands objected to because the Examiner contends that there is no description or support in the specification for the recitation in claim 1 that the parting line extends longitudinally over a majority of the ferrule between the front surface and the rear surface. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection. The specification as originally filed beginning at page 8, line 18-21 states: "the ferrule includes first and second ferrule body portions 12, 14 joined along a parting line 16 *that extends lengthwise between the opposed front and rear surfaces 18, 20 of the ferrule.*" (Emphasis added). Clearly, if the parting line extends lengthwise between the front surface and the rear surface then the parting line extends longitudinally (i.e., in the lengthwise direction) over a majority of the ferrule between the front and rear surfaces. Regardless, Applicants have amended the specification beginning at page 8, line 17 to clarify that:

The rear portion 24 and the shaft portion 22 are sized differently such that a shoulder 23 is defined therebetween. The first body portion 12 and the second body portion 14 are also sized differently such that the parting line 16 *comprises a ledge 17 that extends longitudinally (i.e., in the lengthwise direction) over a majority of the length of the ferrule 10 between the front surface 18 and the rear surface 20. As shown, the ledge 17 extends longitudinally between the front surface 18 and the shoulder 23.* (Emphasis added).

Support for the "ledge" is provided in the application as originally filed beginning at page 5, line 30 and in claim 5. Support for the "shoulder" is provided in the application as originally

filed beginning at page 2 line 24, and again beginning at page 4, line 30. Attached hereto are proposed changes to FIG. 1 and FIG. 2 of the drawings to add reference numeral identifiers for the ledge 17 and the shoulder 23 in each figure. Replacement drawings comprising Replacement Sheet 1/2 and Replacement Sheet 2/2 are being filed concurrently herewith in full compliance with 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.121(d) and 1.84. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the objection to the disclosure of the specification.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

Pursuant to paragraphs 2 and 3 of the above-referenced Office Action, claims 18, 23 and 24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,926,596 to Edwards et al. With respect to independent claim 18, the Examiner asserts that “Edwards et al. discloses “a ferrule comprising at least one optical fiber bore (34) extending from a front surface (42) to a rear surface (44) of said ferrule as shown in Figures 4 and 5; a shaft portion defining exterior surfaces of said ferrule a [as] shown in Figure 4, said exterior surfaces at least partially extending longitudinally between said front and rear surfaces as shown in Figure 4; and a width transition, said width transition extending longitudinally along a majority of said exterior surfaces of, said ferrule shaft portion, said width transition comprising a width offset as shown in the lower portion of Figures 4 and 5 (where the first body portion forms flanges shown as element (22) in Figure 5.)

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection. The Examiner has not *clearly* identified what is considered to be the “shaft portion” and the “width transition” in Edwards et al. Based on the comments provided on page 8 (paragraph 7) of the Office Action, it appears that the Examiner considers the alignment block 12 to be equivalent to Applicants’ first body portion and the overmolded body portion 14 to be equivalent to Applicants’ second body portion. The alignment block 12 extends *beyond* the front surface 42. Therefore, the alignment block 12 alone and the combination of the alignment block 12 and the overmolded body portion 14 cannot be equivalent to the claimed shaft portion. Only the overmolded body portion 14 defines exterior surfaces of the ferrule at least partially extending longitudinally *between the front and rear*

surfaces. Thus, the overmolded body portion 14 alone must be equivalent to the claimed shaft portion.

The Examiner specifically states that "the first body portion [i.e., alignment block] (12) extends outwardly from the second body portion [i.e., overmolded body portion] (14) as shown in Figure 5 and thus defines a width transition (see element 22 in Figure 5) along a *majority* of the *exterior* surfaces of the ferrule *shaft portion*, which comprises a width offset." Office Action at page 8, paragraph 7 (emphasis added). This suggests that the overmolded body portion 14 is considered to be equivalent to the claimed shaft portion (as concluded above). However, the width transition cannot be the element (22) as suggested by the Examiner. Logically, the width transition in Edwards et al. must be the element that represents where the *width* of the first body portion (i.e., the alignment block 12) transitions, or changes, to the *width* of the shaft portion (i.e., the overmolded body portion 14). This change in width occurs along the front surface 42 of the ferrule 10 in a *transverse* direction. In particular, the width transition in Edwards et al. is the *relatively narrow* portion of the front surface 42 that extends *transversely* between the exterior surface of the alignment block 12 and the exterior surface of the overmolded body portion 14.

In contrast, claim 18 recites a width transition that extends "*longitudinally* along a *majority* of said *exterior* surfaces of said ferrule *shaft portion*." Firstly, the width transition defined by Edwards et al. extends *transversely*, and *not longitudinally*. Secondly, the width transition extends *transversely* along a *minor* portion of the *front surface* 42 of the overmolded body portion 14, and thus, cannot extend *longitudinally* along a *majority* of the exterior surfaces of the shaft portion as claimed. Thirdly, if the width transition is considered to be represented by element 22 as suggested by the Examiner, then the width transition does not extend *longitudinally* along a *majority* of the *exterior* surfaces of the *shaft portion* (i.e., overmolded body portion 14). In fact, element 22 extends along the exterior surfaces of the alignment block 12 and the *interior* surfaces of the overmolded body portion 14 (i.e., the claimed shaft portion). Regardless, the element 22 (i.e., claimed width transition) does not extend along a *majority* of the overmolded body portion 14 (i.e., claimed shaft portion). The Examiner cannot rearrange the structure of the prior art reference at will to meet the limitations of the claimed invention.

For at least the reasons stated above, Edwards et al. does not identically disclose (or even fairly suggest) each and every limitation of claim 18. Thus, claim 18 is patentable. Claims 23 and 24 depend directly from patentable base claim 18, and therefore, are likewise allowable for at least the same reasons. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of claims 18, 23 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e).

Allowable Subject Matter

Pursuant to paragraph 4 of the above-referenced Office Action, claims 1-6, 17, 19-22 [sic: 19] and 25-34 stand allowed. Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication of the allowed subject matter and the corresponding statements of reasons for allowance.

Pursuant to paragraph 5 of the above-referenced Office Action, claims 21 and 22 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication of the allowable subject matter. However, Applicants have elected to not rewrite the allowable claims in independent form as suggested by the Examiner in view of the patentability of base claim 18 for the reasons stated hereinabove.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments and remarks, and the corrected drawings filed concurrently herewith, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the objection to the specification and the rejection of claims 18, 23 and 24. This Amendment is fully responsive to the Office Action and places the application in condition for immediate allowance. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to issue a Notice of Allowability for the pending claims 1-6 and 17-39. The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned directly to further the prosecution of any remaining issues, and thereby expedite allowance of the application.

This Amendment results in one (1) additional independent claim and five (5) additional total claims than paid for previously. Accordingly, a fee for excess claims in the amount of \$176 is due. The Examiner is hereby authorized to charge the excess claims fee, and any other fee due in connection with the filing of this response to Deposit Account No. 19-2167. If a fee is required for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 not already accounted for, such an extension is requested and the fee should also be charged to Deposit Account No. 19-2167.

Respectfully submitted,



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[REPLACEMENT SHEET]

1/2

Proposed
Changes

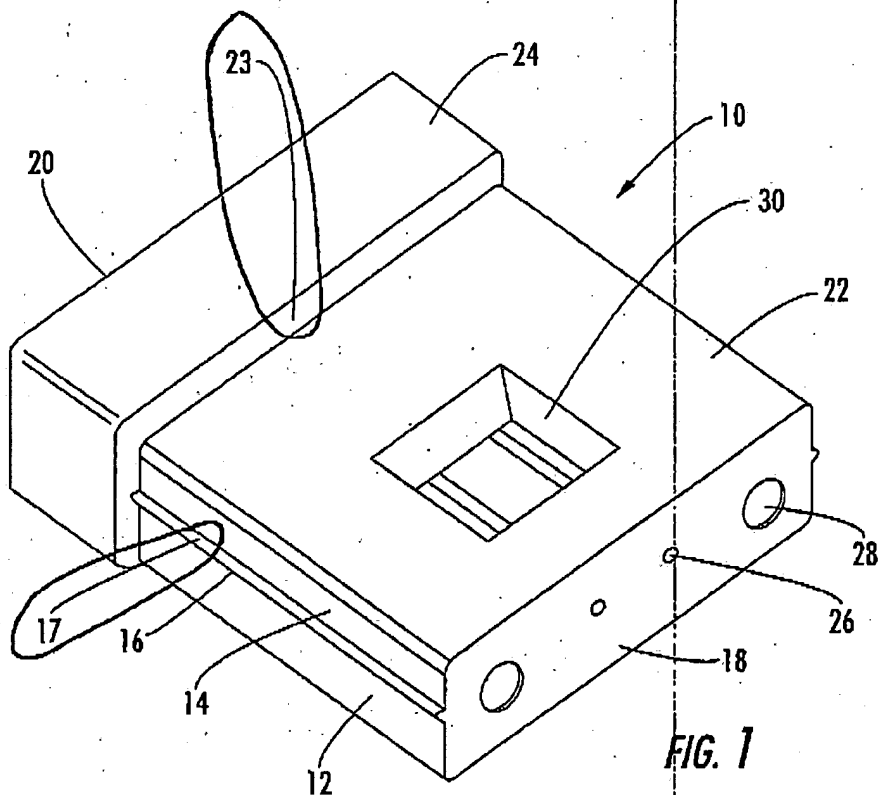


FIG. 1

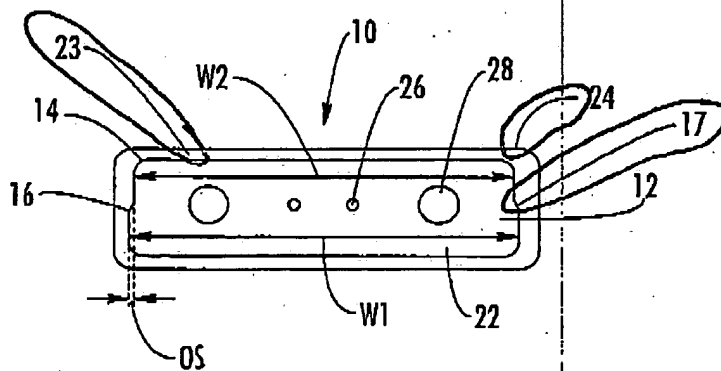


FIG. 2